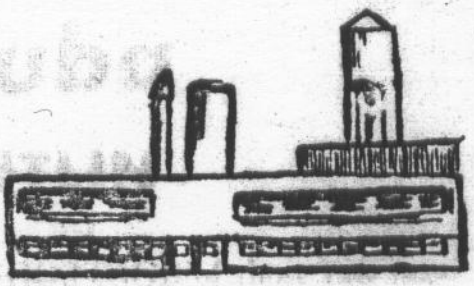
LABOR IN CUBA



CASTRO AND CUBA'S COMMUNISTS

Two Articles By

Maurice Zeitlin

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Labor In Cuba

BY MAURICE ZEITLIN

IT IS NOW two years since the Cuban Revolutionary Government nationalized American-owned commercial and industrial enterprises in Cuba, thus establishing a social structure unique in the Americas. For the past several months, the Cuban economy has been experiencing its gravest difficulties since the revolution came to power. The 1962 *zafra* (sugar harvest) fell below expectations and prevented Cuba from meeting certain international market obligations. There are severe scarcities in foods and consumer goods; the transportation and internal distribution systems are inefficient, while the receipt, storage and distribution of goods from abroad have both tragic and comic aspects. A recent government investigation disclosed that literally tons of drugs and medicines spoiled on Cuban docks because of Cuban ignorance of Soviet medical terminology. Furthermore, one reason for Cuba's population boom is a Czech shipment of 10,000 automobile gaskets instead of the contraceptive diaphragms ordered by the Cubans.

MAURICE ZEITLIN, on the faculty of sociology and anthropology at Princeton University, is co-author with Robert Scheer of The Eagle and the Pearl, *a study of Cuban-American relations since the revolution, to be published this spring as a Dell book.*

THE SHORTAGE of those raw materials and spare parts which once came almost entirely from abroad —primarily from the United States —has begun noticeably to affect production in certain industries. Soft-drink factories are producing only two or three drinks—with "Coke" and "Pepsi" bottles both containing the same local lemon drink. The hops and malt whose importation require the expending of valuable foreign exchange are now being ordered in quantities sufficient only to keep the breweries operating. Textile factories are suffering from shortages of materials, dies and machine parts. Some hard-fiber and leather-goods factories have shut down completely; many others are not reaching even minimal production goals. A huge Westinghouse turbine at the Havana (Regla) oil refinery (formerly Esso) broke down some time ago and has been useless since. Workers throughout the island told us of occasional slowdowns in their plants resulting from parts deficiencies and raw-material shortages. Such difficulties affect not only the economy, but also the workers' morale.

The problem of absenteeism continues to plague much of Cuban industry—one result of the fact that while workers are earning more (because they are now working more regularly), they have little on which to spend their earnings. Moreover,

the tradition of absenteeism, especially in the mines, is strong. Until now, no special sanctions have been imposed to curb absenteeism, but there is talk that this may yet come.

DESPITE these difficulties, gross industrial production (excluding the agricultural sector) has grown at an average annual rate of 7 per cent since January, 1959, according to "Ché" Guevara, Cuban Minister of Industries. The enthusiasm of the Cuban workers for their revolution continues to be evident. In talks with them throughout Cuba, we were told many times that their babies were "a gift of the revolution"; they could now afford to support an additional mouth. One worker said: "Now somebody comes to the door to visit, am I ashamed? I turn him away now in humiliation like oefore? No. We spread out a dinner of plenty of bread, *arroz y frijoles, calabaza* [a kind of squash], even some meat, maybe. That is the truth."

Medical care is available either free or at a nominal cost to most Cubans; and although drugs are scarce, they are, at least, uniformly and moderately priced by the Ministry of Public Health, and in each case the price is printed plainly on the label.

Rents are low; the typical unionized worker spends one-tenth of his monthly earnings on rent for a "house" or "apartment" (many of these are one- or two-room deteriorated quarters without electricity, running water or sanitation facilities) which he now owns or will own in a few years thanks to the Urban Reform Law. Construction of two- and three-room rural houses for agricultural workers, *campesinos*, and workers in the sugar refineries continues throughout the island (obviously, however, the majority of the *campesinos* still live in the pre-Columbian mud-floor thatched hut of a style inherited from the ancient Indians).

Utility rates were all greatly reduced early in 1959, and there is no minimum charge for gas or electricity as there was before the revolution. Workers' centers, beaches, resorts (the fancy Varadero resort costs a worker $14.50 for his wife and family for a week's vacation), children's nurseries for working mothers, new schools and classrooms are other tangible if indirect increments to the real income of the Cuban worker.

Of dramatic importance also is the significant gain in employment. According to their own testimony, most workers are now employed much more regularly and, despite the wage freeze, earning more than before the revolution. For the first time in their lives, many have begun to open savings accounts—something very much encouraged by the government in signs posted everywhere:

> Open a savings account. Reduce the flow of money in the market which induces greater scarcity. Put your money to work for your future and the future of your country.

In the past few months, the Ministry of Public Health completed a campaign of innoculation against polio and it is presently engaged in a campaign against gastroenteritis—the gravest killer of newborn infants in Cuba. Billboards which used to advertise Coca Cola or toothpaste are now used to warn against leaving garbage without covers, to

instruct in the boiling of water and milk, and the scouring of utensils.

ESPECIALLY important is the immeasurable gain for that one-fourth or more of the Cuban population, previously illiterate, who can now (with effort, assuredly) read and write simple sentences. The evidence of the real accomplishments of the education campaign can be seen everywhere one travels in Cuba. We spent at least one day in each of twenty-one widely separated factories throughout Cuba's six provinces; and each factory had a class functioning to raise the minimal level of the worker's education to that of the third grade *(seguimiento)* or the sixth *(superación obrera)*. Courses in *mínimo técnico*, offering basic technical information and training to workers, are also attended regularly. Official, but unpublished, statistics of the Ministry of Industries say that some 72,000 industrial workers are enrolled in these technical courses (though figures on *attendance* are not available)—approximately one-third of the 200,000 industrial workers employed in factories directed by the Ministry of Industries. Some 26,000 workers are enrolled in *superación obrera*, but only 11,000 attend regularly.

THESE COURSES are by no means mere propaganda, although that is assuredly present. Each class must get ten minutes of political instruction, as the special booklet of instructions for teachers in *El Seguimiento* points out, concerning such

> . . . . matters as popular mobilizations, revolutionary slogans, goals of production for the union, emulation, and facts about the center of work. . . .

The introductory textbook in *seguimiento*, in the section on geography, teaches not only such interesting facts as that Cuba is an archipelago rather than an island, but also that

> Imperialism resorts to an economic blockade and military aggressions against our country in order to bridle the Revolution. But our people have said that *they will not retreat and that they prefer to die standing than to live on their knees.*

A test question in the course in Spanish asks:

> Why, if Cuba had so many natural resources, did her people live in misery?

Sample arithmetic problems:

> The unit of concentrate to make Coca Cola costs $64 today. Before, it cost $32 more. How much did the concentrate cost before?

> The workers of the port at Cienfuegos accomplished a great labor. They unloaded in only eight hours one thousand, six hundred and twenty-five sacks of rice. Each sack weighed one hundred and eighty pounds. Write in figures the [number of] sacks they unloaded ——— and the weight of each ———.

But along with this indoctrination, workers are learning geography, physics, mathematics, the Spanish language, Cuban and world history. Workers who never had a grade-school education are now attending night classes after work; and this, as the teachers' instruction booklet says,

> . . . requires intense propaganda. The leaders of all organisms and levels must know that *seguimiento* faces a difficult task: To create in adults the habit of almost always attending class at night.

DESPITE these accomplishments, the general scarcity of goods, the production problems, the intense social pressure to be "revolutionary" and the poor administrative methods in some factories, have caused discontent among a number of industrial workers. The discontent is confined to a minority: it is clear to any objective observer—witness even a recent AP dispatch—that the majority of Cuba's workers are fervent supporters of the revolution. However, it is also clear that wherever we had the opportunity to interview workers we found, on the average, one-fifth of them who feel that the workers are either no better off now or are, in fact, worse off now than they were before the revolution. (This is not merely an impression, but rather data based on a systematic survey carried out in Cuba by my wife and myself during our recent visit.)

Often the discontent grows directly out of local situations: a poor administrator, unrepresentative union delegates, poorly functioning grievance commissions, unhealthy working conditions, etc. *There have been two strikes in Cuba within the past six months,* one in Havana and the other in a Las Villas paper factory. Both were settled, according to "Ché" Guevara, by replacing the factory administrator after investigation had disclosed that the workers' grievances were justified. Guevara was firm in his opinion that strikes stem from the malpractices of those in charge at all levels of the industry, and that strikes—while certainly not to be encouraged—are a necessary working-class weapon to be used when other methods fail.

IN MY talks with Jesús Soto, Organizational Secretary of the central labor organization, CTC-R, and with Carlos Fernández R., member of the CTC-R Executive Committee and editor of the CTC's journal, *Trabajo,* I obtained quite different impressions. Neither seemed to have even an elementary Leninist conception of the labor unions' role as defenders against "bureaucratic deformation" in a "Socialist society." Both stressed the unions' functions of raising the productivity of the workers and heightening their sense of dedication to their work. Neither mentioned that a union ought also to protect the immediate interests of the workers—although they did say that labor organizations should constantly consider means of improving working conditions and extending social services.

Paradoxically, this attitude toward the unions is apparently widespread among the workers themselves. They assert with evident conviction that the factories are now their own, that they run things themselves, that whatever grievances they have can easily be settled through discussion in open assembly. As one worker put it: "Look, *chico,* there's no reason to strike. I mean, well, we're our own bosses; we'd be striking against ourselves. That would be quite a picture, wouldn't it?"

This attitude is strengthened by the workers' knowledge that it is a rare administrator who earns more than the highest paid skilled worker in the same factory. Typical administrators earn the low salary of $350 a month; many earn no more than $250. The administrators in some factories we visited were formerly

skilled workers in the same plants. Their salaries are relatively low not only because "Ché," the Minister of Industries, believes in this as a Socialist principle, but also because wages are frozen and administrators receive the same salaries they earned in their preceding jobs. Some of them do enjoy certain material "fringe" benefits: a car, for instance, if their work requires one.

But the fact is that in general—whether the cynical will believe it or not—the administrator's major gain has been in prestige. He doesn't even have status as the term is used in American industry: workers dash in and out of the offices of production chiefs, personnel directors and administrators without inhibition.

YET IT IS clear that the workers, who are supposed to participate in directing production, do not do so. Participation was supposed to take place through the Technical Advisory Councils, theoretically composed of the most dedicated and conscientious workers. Most workers, however, seem to be almost unaware of the councils' existence.

In contrast, the Grievance Commissions (*Comisiones de Reclamaciones*) have apparently succeeded to a great extent in gaining the workers' approval. The commissions are three-man bodies composed of representatives of (1) the factory administration, (2) the Ministry of Labor (elected by the workers), and (3) the factory work force (also elected by the workers). The commissions are empowered to decide questions involving workers' individual grievances, such as sick leaves, work transfers, dismissals and wages. Once a decision is taken, the worker concerned can appeal to an Appeals Commission, and even directly to the Minister. When I asked Jesús Soto and Carlos Fernández R. what a worker could do if, after going through the whole process of appeal, he was still unsatisfied, they apparently did not understand the implications of the question. "Ché," however, said that a worker could appeal to his union to intervene in his behalf, and involve it in the defense of what he considered his infringed rights.

EVEN when they thought the commissions "bureaucratic," most workers compared them favorably with the burdensome, lengthy and often corrupt process to which even the simplest grievance was subjected in pre-revolution days. In a way, past experience offers a serious obstacle to the development of an autonomous labor movement today. The pre-revolutionary labor movement was riddled with corruption and gangsterism (the Cubans called it "*pistolerismo*"), and was the instrument of the government against the workers. The "labor movement" consisted of a small coterie of "leaders" who, at a price, acted as middlemen for the government. Out of these dealings, some workers occasionally gained something. By tradition, then, Cuban workers are more or less accustomed to government tutelage and control.

The revolution's elimination of corruption and gangsterism in the labor movement has given the workers a naive faith in their present union leadership; they feel that these leaders are workers like themselves, and deserve their confidence. There is a ceiling of $300 a month on the sal-

ary a full-time union functionary can receive, and the workers know it. These functionaries do enjoy other benefits. (For instance, Lazaro Peña, Secretary General of the CTC-R, is not living in a worker's house, but in a fine apartment in Vedado, formerly belonging to an upper-class Cuban, and he has a car and chauffeur.) But these benefits are insignificant when compared to the wealth amassed by the corrupt union leaders of former regimes. As a result, the workers have made no attempt to shape their unions into independent organizational weapons prepared for any eventualities that the future may bring.

In only a few unions—such as the textile union at Ariguanabo or the tobacco union in Las Villas—did I discover union officials who had been active labor leaders before the revolution. Most labor officials today are young and inexperienced, without any personal following among the workers forged out of common struggles in the past; nor, in most cases, do they owe their positions to the workers. Only in a few factories that we visited had there been genuine elections in which several candidates competed for union offices. In most, a *candidatura unica*—one candidate for each office, selected by the ORI (Integrated Revolutionary Organizations) branch, and then "nominated" in general assembly—was the only choice available to the workers. It is true that other candidates could be nominated (most workers apparently had a clear conception of how nominations could be made); and the elections were carried out by secret ballot with a space provided for write-in candidates.

BUT THIS electoral system is hardly conducive to a genuine dialogue about union questions, or to the encouragement of workers' initiative and participation in union affairs. Worst of all, it gives them no experience in what representative democracy can be when it is not subject to manipulation, coercion and corruption, as the elections in Cuba had been. It deadens their sense of participation in the control of their own lives. It allows the unions to become instruments of the government rather than their own organizational weapon. (When I made this same criticism to "Ché," he agreed; he explained that the method of election did not represent government policy, but had been initiated within ORI at the local level, and was now in process of change. The fact that in some factories we found that there had been elections with several candidates tended to confirm "Ché's" statement.)

The most important of the old Communist labor leaders are now back in their positions. Their conception of the role of the trade-union movement—and of "the Party" and the working class—in a "Socialist" society is borrowed from Soviet experience. Five members of the thirteen-man Executive Committee of the CTC-R, and eleven of the Secretaries-General of the twenty-five national labor unions are old Communists. Most of the 26th of July labor leaders, if my discussions with some of them are any indication, do not differ noticeably from the Communists in their thinking.

But there are important labor officials whose views obviously never endeared them to the Communists. Octavio Louit, to cite one, was at-

tacked repeatedly by the Communists during November, 1959, when he opposed a united union candidacy with them. When his name appeared, subsequently, on the list of members nominated for the new Executive Committee of the CTC, the Communist daily, *Noticias de Hoy*, vehemently opposed him. This same Octavio Louit is still on the Executive Committee, as Secretary of Labor Affairs, and is Organizational Secretary of the National Union of Railroad Workers. In a recent speech, reported in *Revolucion*, September 15, 1962,

> ... He affirmed that the Grievance Commissions must not be converted into instruments of the administrators, doing what the administrators consider just or convenient; although, of course, it is valuable to listen to their point of view equally to that of the union local.

One-third of the workers we interviewed throughout Cuba described their present attitudes as either "indifferent" or "hostile" to the Communists. This is true despite the fact that the leaders of the revolution, including Fidel himself, now publicly refer to themselves as "Communists," and that the youth organization of the projected United Party of the Socialist Revolution is called *Jovenes Comunistas*. Many workers who are "anti-Communist" are unquestionably *Fidelistas;* for them, Fidel and the revolution are one thing, while the Communists are quite another.

To us it appeared unquestionable that the vast majority of Cuba's workers — equipped with a small arsenal of modern weapons at every factory — are firmly behind Fidel Castro and the Revolutionary Government.

Castro and Cuba's Communists

FIDEL CASTRO'S speech on March 26, 1962, delivered before a nationwide television audience, was one of the most important political events of the Cuban revolution. It may have signaled the demise of the independent organizational existence of the *Partido Socialista Popular* (Communist Party). The speech began as a vague denunciation of "sectarianism"; but it developed into a direct attack on the party and on a veteran member of its Politburo and National Committee, Aníbal Escalante. Castro charged that Escalante, in collusion with other Communists, had attempted to usurp the authority of the Revolutionary Government:

> The nuclei were deciding and governing at all levels; and the problems of the Ministries, instead of being resolved within the Ministries, were going to the office of ORI [Integrated Revolutionary Organizations] to such an extreme that if a cat gave birth to four kittens, it was necessary to go to the office of ORI to see what was to be decided about that.
>
> That is, there was no theme, there was no question, there was indeed no detail that did not have to be discussed in the office of the ORI. . . .
>
> Was it a real power? No. It was not a real power. It was a formal power. It was a fictitious power. There was no real power in the hands of that *compañero*!

These developments, Castro continued, "were accompanied by subtle campaigns against a series of exceedingly valiant *compañeros* of the Revolution, that originated in the same sectarian politics." Castro asked:

> How did this affect the masses? Well, simply, it dampened the spirit of the masses . . . it dampened the fervor of the masses.
>
> How did this affect the political organization of the Revolution? Quite simple, *compañeros*: we were not creating an apparatus . . . we were creating a yoke, a strait jacket. . . . The masses were not being integrated. They spoke of Integrated Revolutionary Organizations, but what were the organizations? There was one organization formed . . . in the *Partido Socialista Popular*. . . .
>
> So then, how were the nuclei formed? I'll tell you how: in every province they made the general secretary of the PSP the general secretary of the ORI; in all the municipalities they made the secretary general of the PSP the secretary general of the ORI; in all the nuclei . . . they made the PSP member the general secretary of the nucleus. Is that integration?
>
> People began to ask themselves: "But is this communism, is this Marxism, is this socialism? — this arbitrariness, this abuse, this privilege, all of this? . . ." If this is communism, then they will say what the Indian Hatuey said. When they were burning the Indian Hatuey alive, a priest approached to ask if he wanted to go to heaven. And he said: "No. I don't want to go to heaven if this is heaven." Do you understand?

This speech did not mean, nor have the Revolutionary Government's actions since the speech indicated, that the Fidelistas and the Communists have split. As Castro explained:

> What must our attitude toward the old Communists be? It must be an attitude of respect, of recognition of their merits, of recognition of their militancy. What must their attitude be? Modesty. From this moment on, *compañeros*, every difference between old and new, between the Sierra and the plains, between the one who threw bombs and the one who didn't, the one who studied Marxism and the one who did not study Marxism before, must cease definitively. From this moment on we must be one and united.

Despite this declaration of unity, however, Castro could not refrain, in his instructions concerning the "reorganization and purification" of ORI and of all levels of the country's administration, from detailing further the extent to which the Communists had attempted to concentrate power in their hands. Speaking in mid-April before the Provincial Committee of the ORI of Matanzas, Castro said:

> If in whatever factory . . . there were twelve old militants then six were taken, one for the G-2, another as a diplomatic courier, another for the foreign service, another to administer one thing, another for a trip; and there remained six more, and of the six who remained, one they made administrator, the other chief of personnel, the other shop foreman, the other chief of something else — and not one remained. And when it came to forming the revolutionary nucleus, they had recourse to sectarian procedures again, converting into members of the nucleus the administrator, chief of personnel and the shop foreman, plus their secretaries and intimate friends. . . . The masses? Outside! . . . When there

was no old Communist, they chose the brother of an old Communist, the cousin of an old Communist, as if we were living in the Middle Ages, in the epoch of counts and marquis, and not in the epoch of the proletarian revolution.

IN THE WAKE of these speeches, the entire political-economic administration of the country was subjected to a rigorous purging by committees appointed directly by Castro, Ernesto "Ché" Guevera, Minister of Industry, and Raul Castro, Minister of the Armed Forces. Throughout the island, the activities of the local revolutionary nuclei were suspended until a national delegate could oversee their reform and reorganization; general secretaries of provincial and municipal ORI units, factory administrators and chiefs of personnel were replaced or demoted and militia units were reformed.

This process has continued up to now and was going on this summer during the three months that I was traveling throughout Cuba. There was scarcely a factory, town, ministerial department or militia unit that I encountered which had not experienced some sort of reorganization and change of personnel.

It is clear that, until Castro's speech, the Communist organization, despite Communist claims to the contrary, remained more or less intact. Organizational loyalties, lines of communication, directives emanating from officials of the party and the characteristic discipline of party members remained as before. According to Castro himself, the party — led by Aníbal Escalante, who had acted as its general secretary during the clandestine years of the Batista regime — issued its own directives and acted independently of the government. Aníbal Escalante, utilizing his position in the ORI secretariat, saw to it that people who were not members of the *Partido Socialista Popular* were by-passed — that they were neither consulted nor appointed to positions in ORI, the embryo of the projected United Party of the Socialist Revolution.

The PSP was the only one of the three major organizations integrated in the ORI (PSP, Movement of the 26th of July, Revolutionary Directorate) that constituted a real political apparatus. The PSP directed itself toward the preservation of its apparatus, the concentration of key positions in its control and the acquisition of benefits for its members, rather than toward cooperation with the *fidelistas* and the construction of a new United Party. That process has apparently been halted since Castro's speech, the subsequent reorganization of the ORI and Aníbal Escalante's exile from Cuba.

THE reorganization has not meant, to be sure, that old Communists have necessarily been replaced from the cadres of the Movement of the 26th of July or of the Revolutionary Directorate. This has not been merely an act of political expediency by the *fidelistas*, although politics may have played some role.

The PSP's attitude toward the armed struggle of the *fidelistas* against Batista was hostile in the initial stages, and continued to be equivocal throughout the guerrilla war. One reason for this equivocal stand was that the PSP leadership was itself divided — and the divi-

sion continued into the period of the consolidation of the revolution. An internal party struggle was quietly waged over what the PSP should do about the revolutionary government, and about the extent to which it should now give up its own identity and independence. Thus, in the post-March reorganization, Communists were not replaced merely because of their former PSP membership; the more important criterion was their current loyalties as indicated by their actions of the recent past.

Thus, for example, while all six of ORI's provincial general secretaries had been old Communists, only four were replaced (three by non-Communists). The reorganization elsewhere apparently followed a similar pattern. There are, then, former members of the PSP still in important positions throughout the government and in the national secretariat of ORI; but the PSP itself has been dissolved and the original leaders of the Revolution — the men who led the armed struggle for power — are firmly in control.

Most important, despite their self-proclaimed adherence to Marxism-Leninism, the ideology of the Cuban revolutionary leaders continues to resemble more what a reporter for the London *Observer* called "the old-fashioned revolutionary socialism of Keir Hardie" than that amalgam of Russian temperament, Soviet experience and Marxist theory which has come to be identified as Marxism-Leninism.

IT IS worth citing at length excerpts from the speech by Castro in which he initiated his attacks on "sectarianism," since in that speech he describes his view of history and of what the attitude of a Marxist should be. On March 13, the students of the University of Havana met to commemorate the death of José Echevarria, founder of the Revolutionary Directorate, who had died on that date in 1957. A student speaker, a leader of the *Jovenes Rebeldes*, read Echevarria's "political testament" but omitted from it the phrase:

> We are confident that the purity of our intentions will bring us God's blessing so that we may bring the rule of justice to our nation.

Castro became incensed when he noticed this omission. In essence, he denounced the rewriting of history and asserted his belief in freedom of expression:

> Are we going to mutilate what [Echevarria] believed? . . . What kind of faith is that in one's own ideas? What conception is that of history? . . . Could such cowardice be called a dialectical conception of history? Could such a manner of thinking be called Marxism? . . . If we followed that mode of thought, we would have to destroy the concept of the revolutionary from Spartacus to Martí. As a result of that myopic, sectarian, stupid and warped conception, which denies history and denies Marxism, we would be forced to deny all values, all history. We would be forced to deny our very roots! . . . For all that treasury of human progress, of human effort, of human sacrifice, should be gathered up and added to our nation's beautiful history and to the beautiful history of a mankind which is progressing. . . .
>
> We say that in the struggle for national liberation, in the struggle against imperialism . . . in the fight against *latifundismo* and exploitation,

the fact that one may be a believer, whether his religion is Christian or whatever, while the other is a Marxist — has faith in Marxist philosophy — is no obstacle; and we come here with this display of cowardice to suppress a phrase. . . .

Into what is the Revolution changed by this? Into a tyranny! And that is not revolution! . . . And what must the Revolution be? The Revolution must be a school of courageous men, the Revolution must be a school in which there is liberty of thought! . . .

CONSISTENT with Castro's attitude, bookstores throughout Cuba continue to sell whatever there remains of books by Western scholars, as well as polemically anti-Socialist and anti-Communist books: books, for instance, in Spanish, such as *Religion en alcance de todos, La iglesia catolica frente al comunismo,* and Lerner and Cassel's *Teoria general de Keynes.*

The Biblioteca Nacional, Cuba's central public library, continues to receive regularly such U.S. publications as *Time, Life, U.S. News, Look* and the *New Leader,* as well as such journals as *The New Republic* and *The Nation.* British newspapers such as the London *Observer* and the *Manchester Guardian* are also available. The full spectrum of political opinion, then, can be read in the foreign press by anyone with the knowledge and the inclination to do so.

The libraries of the University of Havana, the Central University of Las Villas and the Biblioteca Nacional have general scholarly collections comparable to those in our own college libraries. Among the many polemically anti-Communist books (in Spanish) in the Biblioteca Nacional, for example, here are some catalogued under "Communism" (with their call numbers, so that any interested AP or UPI reporter can check):

335.43: Ponce de Leon, *Los Monstruos que Acechen.* 337.47: S. J. Walsh, *Imperio Total.*

At the University of Havana library:

335. E: Max Eastman, *Reflexiones sobre el fracaso del socialismo.*

335.4 K: Arthur Koestler, *El mito sovietico ante la realidad.*

943.7 S: Dana Adams Schmidt, *Anatomia de un estado satelite.*

There are also such varied works as Trotsky's *Terrorismo y comunismo,* Hans Kelsen's *Teoria comunista del derecho y el estado,* M. Ketchum's *What Is Communism,* Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Center,* Blas Roca and Earl Browder's *La conferencia del cancilleres de la Habana* and Raul Roa's *En pie.* (The last two, because of their revisionism and anti-Soviet polemics, are particularly embarrassing to two prominent Cuban politicians.)

It is possible to hear American broadcasts clearly on ordinary radio in many parts of Cuba, and the government has not attempted to prevent this in any way. American movies, glorifying the American way of life, Hollywood-style, continue to play at almost every Cuban movie theater and on afternoon TV.

DESPITE the fact that the majority of Cubans in all walks of life are supporters of Fidel Castro (as one becomes convinced after touring the country), it is quite easy to find opponents of the regime—especially in Havana, where perhaps 50 per cent of the people are discontented. Taxi drivers and bus boys, depart-

ment store clerks and grocers will, with the slightest encouragement, engage in a vituperative denunciation of the government. One can travel, as my wife and I did, from one end of the country to the other, knocking on doors at random, talking to people in their homes, in public squares and parks, in factories and schools, on the university campus or in buses and theatre lobbies, without being interfered with—talking and questioning, and even giving the U.S. Government's viewpoint on international affairs.

In one factory, a group of workers cornered the American sociologist who had been interviewing them to ask some questions of their own. Since it was quitting time, the crowd soon grew to over fifty workers who raised questions about everything from the inevitable American "Negro problem" to Soviet nuclear testing. And they received a brief lecture on our federal system of government in explanation of the President's difficulties in enforcing the Supreme Court's desegregation decision, and an opinion that the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing had led to increased tensions and helped to confirm the view that the Soviet Union is an aggressive power. An exciting interchange continued for more than a half hour until the bus arrived to transport the workers home.

The fact is, then, that Cubans can and do inquire and speak freely about whatever they wish—at this moment. On the other hand, the newly reorganized curriculum of the University of Havana requires that every student must take one year of a course entitled "Dialectical Materialism," whether he be studying medicine or physics. The textbooks in most courses are direct translations of Soviet texts. The great majority of books sold on newsstands and in bookstores are from the Soviet bloc countries, China and Yugoslavia. More important, the Cuban newspapers, radio and TV are, essentially, instruments of the government, and there are no noticeable differences among the opinions expressed by the various editorial writers and news commentators (many of whom lift their "opinions" bodily from Tass). A one-sided view of international issues is constantly given in the mass media which glorifies the Soviet Union and denigrates the United States. Cuban newsreels are masterful propaganda documents which emphasize the seamier side of American life and distort the workings of our democratic political system.

Organized dissent is prohibited, if one can judge by the government's response to a recent demonstration of a group of housewives in Cárdenas who went marching through the streets banging pots to protest food shortages. The next day the government put on an impressive military display which included helmeted soldiers (a sight one rarely sees in Cuba) and tanks.

THERE are no formal safeguards of freedom of speech and association or of personal, civil and political rights, of the kind traditional to Western political democracies. Such freedoms as do exist depend only on what Fidel has called "the revolution's generosity to its opponents." There are certainly no institutional mechanisms or judicial procedures designed to protect the individual and guarantee his freedom from un-

reasonable search and seizure or arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. The members of the government, the Cabinet ministers, are responsible not to the general citizenry—who did not elect them and who had no direct voice in their selection—but only to themselves and the handful of revolutionary leaders—Fidel, Raul, "Ché,"—who appointed them.

These leaders *are*, in fact, the government. They are the decision-makers; and there are no established channels by which the masses can directly influence them or recall them. (One must not forget, on the other hand, that the people are armed; wherever one goes, one sees ordinary citizens, including long-finger-nailed women in high heels, with rifles or sub-machine guns slung over their shoulders. If this is not an institutional mode of insuring the responsibility of government figures, it is, nevertheless, a certain source of countervailing power.)

It is quite obvious from the above that the potentialities for totalitarian rule are strong in today's Cuba. They have been held in check until this moment by Fidel and his fellow revolutionary leaders whose personal beliefs are anti-totalitarian. Unless strong and immediate steps are taken, however, to establish legal guarantees of civil liberties, the present uneasy equilibrium of democratic and anti-democratic tendencies may be upset. Such steps are not likely to be taken, though, by the revolutionary leaders in the state of impending siege in which Cuba finds herself today. The chances that the libertarian features of the Castro regime will survive, are likely to become increasingly slimmer the louder are the demands in our Congress —and the closer to fruition they become—for the blockade, invasion and overthrow of the Revolutionary Government.

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